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**Does Peace Education Make a Difference in the Context of an Intractable
Conflict?**

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Abstract

Peace education in regions of intractable conflict faces a number of severe challenges such as conflicting collective narratives, shared histories and beliefs, grave inequalities, excessive emotionality and unsupportive social climates. In this light the chances of success for peace education programs are rather slim. A series of quasi-experimental studies carried out with Israeli-Jewish and Palestinian youngsters revealed that despite the ongoing violence, participation in various programs yield positive attitudinal, perceptual and relational changes manifested in, for example, more positive views of "peace," better ability to see the other side's perspective, and greater willingness for contact. These changes depend on participants' initial political views, thus, as found in one study, play an attitude-reinforcing function, but, as found in another study, prevent the worsening of perceptions of and attribution to the other side, thus serving in a preventive capacity.

Peace Education in the Context of Intractable Conflicts

Not all conflicts are born alike. One way to distinguish between conflicts is according to their socio-political context (Salomon, 2002). The kind of context of interest here is the *intractable* (Coleman, 2003; Kriegsberg, 1993) or *protracted* conflict (Fisher, 1997). Such a conflict is characterized by being stubborn, violent, central and total (Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998), and is accompanied by great uncertainties, stress and – more often than not – strengthened adherence to the collective narrative of one's group (e.g., Foster, 1999) and consequently – extreme close mindedness (Rapoport, 1960).

The conceptions of what peace education attempts to achieve through its joint school-based or off-campus programs and learning projects, weekend workshops, summer camps, community-based seminars, theater clubs, are many and varied. Basically, one speaks of changed attitudes, increased tolerance, reduced prejudices, weakened stereotypes, changed conceptions of self and of "other," reinforced sense of collective identity, and the like (see e.g., Bar-Tal, 2002; Bjerstedt, 1993; United Nations, 1999). According to a related approach to peace education (Salomon, in press), it would aim primarily to attain the legitimization of the other side's perspective, its collective narrative, fears, dreams and experiences. Some programs try to attain exactly that, while others aim at far more modest goals; they try no more than what Marc Ross (2000) has called "good enough conflict management. That is, rather than expect peace education to lead to conflict resolution, which – unlike events in the school yard or neighborhood – greatly depends on political and economic forces not affected by educational interventions, some programs try to attain just a bit more mutual understanding, tolerance and some reduction of violence (e.g., Bar-On, 2000).

It is important to distinguish here between the context, and hence the main thrust of *peace education*, on the one hand, and the context and main attributes of *conflict resolution*, as conceived and practiced mainly in education (e.g., Johnson & Johnson, 1996; Van Slyck, Stern, & Elbedour, 1999). Teaching conflict resolution, usually carried out in schools and other formal educational settings, focuses on self perceptions, self monitoring and certain social skills that include listening, negotiating and being helped by mediation (Deutsch, 1993). The focus here is mainly, although not exclusively, on the *interpersonal* aspect of conflicts aiming at changed behaviors and attitudes that will lead to the conflicts' peaceful resolution. Not so peace education where the focus is the *inter-group* aspect of the conflict, aiming at changed perceptions, attitudes and feelings that will lead, so one hopes, to a different way of relating to the other collective side of the conflict. Peace education, quite uniquely, deals with relations between groups, not individuals (Salomon, 2002). There is, of course, some overlap between conflict resolution and peace education, such as being able to examine one's own (or one's own group's) contribution to the conflict, which is common to both. Still the core is different: The acquisition of conflict resolution skills is not an important part of peace education while coming to acknowledge the humane side of one's collective adversary is not a central part of conflict resolution.

The Challenges That Uniquely Face Peace Education

Peace education in contexts of intractable conflicts faces challenges not often faced by interpersonal conflict resolution. These challenges, briefly described below, raise serious questions as to the success chances of peace education.

Collective narratives and historical memories: Peace education has to struggle with the collision between two contradicting, often mutually exclusive, deeply rooted collective narratives. Each side has its way of describing its identity – what does it

mean to be "Kosovar," "African American," "Palestinian" or "Israeli"; each side entails in its collective narrative the story of the conflict – who is "good" and who is the "villain," who started what, and who did what to whom. Each side bases all this on the way it tells its history – its nation-building revolution, its Alamo, its Stalingrad, its Holocaust, the conquests and victories, heroes and arch-enemies of the past – all those experiences that were crystallized into a collective narrative and identity and were transmitted through curricula, ceremonies, holidays and rituals (e.g., Barthes, 1973; Polkinghorne, 1988). Collective memories hold in a tight grip a group's identity, sense of purpose and belief in its moral standing. Examples are the Protestant commemoration of William of Orange, ritualized through the marches through Catholic streets, or that famous 1989 speech of Milosevic in Kosovo in which he awakened Serbs' 600 year old memories of conquest by the Turks. The importance of collective memories is underscored by the way groups rewrite their histories to adapt to current political-national needs. For example, Walker (1996) claims that the memories of the 1690 Battle of the Boyne in N. Ireland, were invented for political purposes in the late nineteenth century. The Finnish scholar Sirkka Ahonen (1999) shows how some Baltic states totally reversed the historical roles of Sweden and Russia, to serve their newly acquired identity as independent Non-Communist states. Collectively held historical memories are thus the backbone of a group's proud sense of identity and the source of the stereotypes and prejudices it holds of others. How does one combat these with a few weekends of intergroup encounter?

Collectively held beliefs about "us" and about "them": Emanating from the collective narratives are sets of beliefs that each side holds, mirroring the ones held by the other side. Such beliefs are necessary as coping mechanism, particularly during the stressful times of conflict. Typical beliefs are, for example, that "we" are right but

"they" are wrong; "we" are the victims while "they" are the aggressors; "we" only respond, thus even when "we" do harm, "they" are to blame; "we" are moderate, while "they" are radicals; or "they" understand only the language of force (Rouhana & Bartal, 1998; L. Ross & Ward, 1995; Salomon, in press).

Built-in inequalities: Whereas collective narratives, historical interpretations and sets of beliefs can be said to be like mirror images of each other, in most conflicts the two sides to the conflict are hardly ever equal. In fact, conflicts entail grave inequalities between the economically strong and weak, between conqueror and conquered, majority and minority, or politically powerful and weak. Such inequalities imply for peace education that the two sides pursue two different, often opposing agendas. A recent study (Maoz, 2000) illustrates this point. Israeli-Jewish teachers, supposed to jointly plan curricular units with Palestinian teachers, focused during their structured meetings with Palestinians more on the pedagogical task assigned to them. The Palestinians, on the other hand, preferred to dig into the past, trying to extract from their Jewish partners acknowledgement of past wrongdoings and recognition of their national identity. Given these two contrasting agendas, it is no wonder that the joint project did not fare well (Maoz, 2000). Indeed, being recognized and acknowledged is "given urgency by the supposed link between recognition and identity" (Taylor, 1994, p. 25). Similarly, the very conception of peace turns out to be very different for the politically strong and the weak, the conqueror and conquered. Whereas the former (Israelis) see peace as cooperation and harmony, attainable through commerce and tourism, the latter (Palestinians) see in it the attainment of equality and independence, to be achieved through war (Biton, 2002).

Excessive emotionality: Intractable conflicts are often accompanied by raw feelings such as anger, bereavement, fear, and uncertainty. Anger, stress, and related

strong emotions, interfere with more rationale judgments and perceptions (Janis, 1982), greatly debilitating one's ability to tolerate the other side, rationally judging its stand, and perceiving it in a less negative and threatening way.

For example, Ayelet Roth of the Haifa University has recently piloted with the idea of induced compliance whereby individuals are subtly lead to behave in a way that contradicts their attitude (Cooper & Fazio, 1984). Specifically, two pairs of Israeli-Palestinian teachers were to correspond over the Internet with two pairs of Israeli-Jewish teachers. Each side was to write the way the *other* side sees certain conflictual events, past and present, and receive feedback from members of that other side. For example, Jews were to describe the way Palestinians see the 1948 *Naqbah* (catastrophe) whereas the Palestinians were to describe the way Jews see their 1948 war of independence. The logic behind such an intervention is based in part on dissonance theory, whereby describing an opponent's perspective makes one disagree with it a bit less (Aronson, 1988), and on the idea that such an activity brings to the surface new information not mentally available until now.

The pilot study turned into a majestic failure. The eight participating teachers, all of them volunteers with pro-peace views, could not detach themselves from their respective collective perspectives. The exchanges took place during the peak of the Israeli military suppression of the *Intifadah*, making Palestinian teachers particularly agitated, angry and frustrated, saying quite explicitly that they could not possibly step into the shoes of the oppressors of their brethren. Forced compliance usually works (e.g., Leippe & Eisenstadt, 1994), but apparently not in contexts of intractable conflict when feelings are strong and all consuming.

A context of animosity, fear and belligerence. Peace education often takes place in contexts that are characterized by an atmosphere of fear, a mentality of siege

and belligerence which makes it an elusive matter (Bar-Tal, 2002). For its success peace education would require the support of politicians, the media, the education system, parents and the public in general. But during active conflict, such support is not available, making peace education to be viewed by many as some kind of a subversive activity.

These are a few of the challenges uniquely facing peace education and raising serious questions about its chances of leaving any measurable and worthwhile traces. As Gordon Allport is said to have commented that it is easier to smash atoms than stereotypes, to which one could add that this becomes particularly difficult when the stereotypes are rooted in collectively held narratives, historical memories, beliefs about one's self righteousness and strong feelings of anger, hatred and frustration.

The (Un)known Effects of Peace Education Programs

Strangely enough, despite the large number of peace education programs and projects taking place all over the world, from Sri-Lanka (e.g., Perera, 1996) to Rwanda (e.g., Mukarubuga, 2002), from Kosovo (e.g., Piggot, 1995) to Northern Ireland (Smith, 1999), there is very little research and program evaluation to accompany such activities. The only exceptions are the social psychological (but rarely educational) studies on the *contact hypothesis* (Tal-Or, Boninger, & Gleicher, 2002), and those pertaining to school-based interpersonal conflict resolution (e.g., e.g., Johnson & Johnson, 1996). Peace education, as practiced in educational and community settings, is much practiced but not often systematically studied. Nevo and Brem (2002) searched for peace education studies carried out in the last 20 years in real-life intervention settings, covering all available databases and websites. They identified 104 articles and chapters that dealt with "peace education. Of these, 79 were empirical studies but only 13 dealt with peace education rather than with in-school

conflict resolution, mediation and violence reduction programs. A second search of the database *Proquest* from 1986 to 2001 revealed 15 articles on peace education but not one of them is a research article. A similar new search of ERIC yielded 394 entries but only 15 were research reports.

The most practiced, and hence studied approach to peace education is the face to face encounter between members of groups in conflict. This approach follows Sherif's (1966) well known Robber's Cave summer-camp study where the combination of having to solve a superordinate common problem and working together towards a common goal yielded positive attitude changes towards a disliked outgroup. But, as many studies carried out over the years on the *contact hypothesis* have shown (see for summary and critique: Tal-Or, Boninger & Gleicher, 2002), Sherif's paradigm does not always work, leading to the construction of a long list of conditions that need to be met such that the intergroup contact be effective. Pettigrew (1998) has recently summarized the most important ones as follows: There must be (a) equal status between the groups, (b) sustained interaction between participants, (c) interdependence in carrying out a common task, (d) support from authorities, and (e) potential for the development of friendships.

The problem, as it turns out, is that these conditions can hardly ever be met. To begin with, even if equality within the group's parameters is attained, the blatant outside inequality and discrimination penetrates into the group meetings. It does not disappear when the doors close and the meeting begins (Cornell, 1994). Also, although groups may be given a common task or problem to solve, the two sides may nevertheless pursue opposing agendas, as already discussed above. A third issue concerns the support from the surrounding social environment or authorities. Even when so-called "diversity workshops" are conducted between different ethnic groups

in relatively calm contexts, severe difficulties arise concerning "reentry" into participants' unsupportive home environments and the actual application of their new feelings and beliefs (McCauley, 2002). Often, in the context of intractable conflict, peace education programs take place while surrounded by a general atmosphere of hostility. The chances for success of contact groups may be very slim where the media, politicians, even the educational system convey a mood of self-righteousness and animosity toward the other side of the conflict (Bar-Tal, 2002).

There is additional evidence to question the effectiveness of the inter-group contact. Cairns and Hewstone (2002) report on the naturally occurring contacts of Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland, contacts that the government spent millions to boost through the educational sector. However, as the authors point out, there was very little return on the money. Yet, there was no worsening of the situation, a point to be discussed later on. They examined data about contacts between Catholics and Protestants from 1968, when the *Troubles* began, to 1999. The data pertain to housing patterns, cross-group friendships, mixed marriages, integrated schooling, and voting behavior. Their conclusion was that -

[D]espite a major investment of time and money in promoting greater contact, a major divide still exists between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland...Survey data of the period 1968-1999 indicate that although public levels of optimism about the future of cross-community relations have been improving, they still have not moved beyond the point they had reached in 1968 before the *troubles* began, and before the policy of encouraging cross-community contacts was implemented (p. 223).

In short, it appears that peace education programs, whether in the form of planned interventions or as more naturally occurring interactions, may not be particularly effective in the context of intractable conflict. Whereas ample information

is available about peace education programs and their implementation, we have far less information about their ultimate effectiveness.

While the paucity of available research is not encouraging, caution is called for since not much can be concluded on the basis of limited research. Numerous questions have not yet been asked and evaluation methods not yet employed. The questions of what works, with whom, under what conditions, for how long, and according to which criteria need systematic research and evaluation. For example, there are no data on long term effects of peace education programs. Similarly, the use of attitude questionnaires has its limitations. What if other, perhaps more projective measures would be used, what would the findings be? A series of studies on peace education, most of them carried out during the Palestinian uprising (the *Intifadah*), is reported below. These studies attempt to provide a tentative answer to the question – does peace education make a difference despite the obstacles described above?

Recent Findings on the Effects of Peace Education in the Israeli/Palestinian Context

It would seem that in contexts of intractable conflict, and in the absence of social and institutional support, peace education is doomed to fail even in the short run. How could a program succeed while facing the challenges it does? The paucity of research and evaluation, the conditions found to be required for the success of encounter groups, and the data from Northern Ireland, add up to a rather discouraging picture.

But peace education programs continue to be designed and implemented, even under the worst conditions of violent conflict and continued animosity, as is the case these days between the Israelis and the Palestinians. And although the continued implementation of peace education programs in the face of severe challenges may

signal no more than naive inertia, they may nevertheless have some positive impact that could be quite instructive. To studies that examine such a possibility we turn next.

These studies were of peace education programs carried out either in Israeli-Jewish high schools and in Palestinian high schools, or during an off-campus three-day joint Israeli-Palestinian workshop taking place in a secluded retreat. A school's decision to participate in a peace education program is usually made by the school's administrators and faculty, hinting at their political preferences. Still, such possible preferences do not in any way apply to the student body who represent a wide range of political views. Participation in a peace education program usually pertains to one or another high school class, leaving other, parallel classes, as comparable non-participating controls.

Studying somebody else's conflict

The first study, carried out by Lustig (2003), was, in effect, a study of transfer of learning, as applied to peace education. One of the leading NGOs in Israel (IPCRI), conducts peace education programs in both Israeli and Palestinian high schools. The program is carried out separately for each kind of school, but ultimately the students meet each other. In 2001 this kind of face to face meeting had become impossible due to the *Intifadah* – The violent Palestinian uprising and the Israeli military suppression of it. Nevertheless, and despite the fact that Palestinian schools pulled out of the study, Israeli-Jewish schools continued with it. The program for eleventh graders (ages 16-17) consists of studying a *foreign* conflict – that of Northern Ireland. Not a word is mentioned during the four months period of studying that conflict about the local conflict. And while the students learn about the views, that is, the collective narratives of the two sides of the Northern Irish conflict, no analogies are explicitly drawn with the local conflict. Do the students carry out such analogies on their own?

If so, what lessons do they apply from the N.I. conflict to the Israeli-Palestinian one? Are they voluntarily transferring any lessons learned from the remote conflict to their understanding of the one closer to home?

Sixty eight Israeli twelfth graders participated in a pre- and posttest study, half of them in the program group and the other half in a no-program comparable control group. Three measures were employed: A pre- and posttest questionnaire tapping attitudes toward the Palestinians, a posttest questionnaire measuring understanding of the Northern Irish conflict, particularly its two sidedness, and a posttest measure consisting of two essays the youngsters were asked to write: One describing the conflict from the Jewish-Zionist point of view, the other – from the Palestinian perspective.

No particularly interesting or consistent differences between the groups were revealed by the questionnaires, but very interesting ones emerged from the examination and analysis of the essays. The first finding was rather simple and straightforward: Whereas 94% of the program participants wrote full size essays from the Palestinian perspective, only 25% of the non-participants were capable, or willing, to describe the conflict from their adversary's point of view (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

Apparently, exposure to the Northern Irish conflict, its two sidedness of claims and beliefs, so transparent to an outsider and so opaque to a defensive insider, enables outsiders to detect similar qualities in the conflict in which they are involved, thus "allowing" them to dare and write about the conflict from their adversary's perspective.

Relatedly, the essays written by the program participants employed significantly more positive terms (3.4 positive words on average, as compared with

1.8 by the non-participants) such as "conflict resolution," "compromise" and "negotiation. On the other hand, the non-participants tended to employ on average significantly more negative terms such as "war," "death," and "deportation" (4.11 vs. 2.76 by participants). Perhaps most interesting is the finding that 44% of the program participants wrote many of their "Israeli" essays, but particularly those from the Palestinian perspective (87.5%), from a first figure, personal perspective. In comparison, the non-participants tended to use the more detached third figure in their description of both the Israeli (78%) and the Palestinian point of view (40%).

Examination of correlational patterns revealed that whereas for the non-participants, blaming the Palestinians for the conflict was negatively related to perception of the Jewish responsibility ($r = -.519$, $p < .001$), no such correlation was found among the participants ($r = -.009$). For the latter, blaming the Palestinians had nothing to do with the Jewish responsibility for the conflict.

It becomes evident that studying a remote conflict can serve as an analogy to the one closer to home. Thus, conclusions students reach about the former become transferred to the latter. Seen as an analogue to the Northern Irish conflict, the one between Israel and the Palestinians can suddenly be seen in a new light. More generally, it may well be the case that studying another conflict, one in which students have no stake and no emotional involvement, circumvents defenses such as entrenchment and reactance which would arise if direct persuasion would be attempted (Tormala & Petty, 2002).

Effects on the Conception of "Peace"

Another interesting outcome of peace education programs concerns changes in one's conception of "peace. Children's perceptions of "peace" have been studied in a variety of countries, from mainly a psychological-developmental perspective

(Hakvoort & Oppenheimer, 1999) but not as a function of participation in peace education programs. To what extent does participation in a peace education, school-based program, affect the way the concept of "peace" is conceived? Does participation in such a program differentially affect the strong side – the Israelis, as compared to the much weaker side – the Palestinians?

Biton (2002) studied these questions, using a 2 (Israeli-Jews vs. Palestinian youth) x 2 (participation vs. no participation in a peace education program) factorial design with more than 800 high school students aged 14-15. Assignment to the experimental and control groups was done by the toss of a coin whereby one class in a school was assigned to participate in the program while a parallel class served as a control group. The researcher administered various pre- and posttest measures that tap the youngsters' conception of "peace. Comparability between the groups was ascertained on the basis of the pretest. The year-long program in which the participants took part consists of cognitive elements such as issues of equality, tolerance for the other and similar civil values, and experiential elements whereby the classroom is used as a stage on which tolerance and acceptance of the other is played out. Meetings with members of the other side in the conflict are an integral part of the program.

Participation in the peace education program of both Israelis and Palestinians increased the percentage of youngsters providing "positive peace" free associations (that is, reference to peace as cooperation and harmony) to the question of What does peace mean to you? In the Jewish group the percentage rose from 9.6% to 37% and in the Palestinian group - from 5.4% to 26.4%. The percentages remained unchanged over time among the non-participants (Figure 2).

INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

Another measure pertained to means for attaining peace. The use of *war* as a means to attain peace *rose* among the non-participating Palestinians from 31.4% at pretest time (mid October) to 52.6% at posttest time (end of May); it *dropped* at the same time from 33.3% to 23.6% among the Palestinian participants. The percentages among the Jews were low from the outset but among the non-participants it increased from zero to 11%. Among participants it increased only slightly from 0.4% to 4.5% (Figure 3). The increase in the percentage of non-participating youngsters advocating war versus the decrease among the participants suggests that peace education may not only change perceptions and conceptions in the positive, desired direction, but may serve as a barrier against the adverse effects of harmful external events.

INSERT FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE

This trend was particularly manifested among the Palestinians. Analysis of open-ended responses revealed that the average number of responses expressing *hatred* of the Jews *doubled* among non-participants (from .845 per person to 1.706, $p < .01$), while among the program participants it remained low and unchanged from pre- to posttest (.690 and .782, respectively, NS). This provides further evidence for a hitherto unnoticed phenomenon: Peace education as a barrier against the deterioration of attitudes and perceptions caused by the adverse events taking place outside the confines of the program.

Does Suffering Make One More Empathic?

A third study was carried out to answer the question of whether experiencing suffering makes individuals more sensitive to the suffering of others. When applied to the Jewish experience of the Holocaust, the question becomes whether visits of high school Israeli youngsters to the death camps in Poland ("*The March of Life*," as it is called) positively affects their empathy towards the suffering of the Palestinians.

Moralists would advance the hypothesis that it should, while an alternative hypothesis might well be that participation in the *March of Life* can easily reinforce Israelis' sense of and monopoly over victimhood. Hence it can *reduce* their empathy toward the suffering of others, particularly when those "others" consist of a threatening enemy whose suffering is blamed on the Israelis. Feelings of monopoly over victimhood, fear and guilt may well combine to reduce empathy.

Shechter (2002) carried out a quasi-experimental study with 309 eleventh graders (ages 16-17), half of whom participated in the *March of Life* and half did not. Although assignment to experimental and control group was not random, the choice to participate was not associated with political views or other variables relevant to the study. Comparisons between the groups' pretests and background variables showed no differences on any of the variables measured.

Both hypotheses were supported: Initial political views were correlated with changes in empathy (only in the experimental group) such that the empathy with the Palestinians of the more hawkish participants tended to reduce whereas the empathy of the more dovish participants tended to increase. The crucial mediating variable appears to have been the lessons derived from the *March of Life*. Youngsters who drew more *nationalistic* morals from their visit to the death camps (e.g., "Jews have to keep protecting themselves against anti-Semitism"), tended to express identification with the victims and feelings of power and pride, but these lessons or feelings had no bearing on expressed empathy towards the Palestinians. On the other hand, youngsters who initially had more dovish views also drew more *universalistic* morals from their visit to the death camps, expressed more feelings of fear and helplessness and tended to manifest increased empathy towards the Palestinians. Importantly, the visit to the camps affected empathy mainly through the universalistic lessons drawn, not the

nationalistic ones. Second, the feelings aroused by the visit to the camps had only a weak or no effect on empathy. It appears that while there was greater (or lesser) *understanding* of the Palestinian plight, empathy had little to do with *feeling* (Figure 4).

INSERT FIGURE 4 ABOUT HERE

The Role of Sharing Personal Experiences

The question of changing one's identity from being monolithically focused on being victimized by the other side to a more complex sense of being also a perpetrator was addressed by Bar-On (2000) through *The Reflection and Trust* (TRT) approach he developed and implemented with adult participants (Albeck, Adwan, & Bar-On, 2002). This approach covers the middle ground between the *human relations approach* to peace education, whereby groups meet to improve interpersonal relations to the exclusion of debating the conflict, on the one hand, and the *collective identity approach*, on the other, whereby groups meet to discuss their inter-group conflict to the exclusion of developing personal relations. The TRT approach enables participants to reflect and share their personal experiences within the context of their respective collective histories, thus allowing them to develop trust and personal relations. This Approach was implemented through a series of TRT encounters between offsprings of Nazi perpetrators and Holocaust survivors over a six year period (Bar-On, 1995). To one of these encounters also members of other conflictual groups from Northern Ireland, South Africa, Israel and Palestine were added. Evaluation of the process and the effects of this encounter suggested that, as one of the participants revealed – "Amazing! If you tell your story in an honest way, not avoiding all kinds of feelings, it also opens up the other participants and enables them

to do it in the same way" (Maoz & Bar-On, 2002, p. 41). Through quantitative and qualitative evaluations it became evident that the honest and detailed personal storytelling that involves the sharing of memories and pain, inner conflicts and insights, combined with the emotional support of the group, allows one to go "beyond victimhood. This in turn supports the reconstruction of a more complex identity not fixated anymore on one's sense of being a victim. According to Salomon's theory (Salomon, 2002; in press), such changes are part of and underlie the legitimization of the other side's perspective.

Do New Personal Friendships Change Perceptions of the "Other" Collective?

Another study examined the question of whether interpersonal friendships that emerge during encounter groups between Israelis and Palestinians generalize (a) to become greater acceptance of members of the other group (not just those individuals participating in the meetings) and (b) to (at least partial) legitimization of the other group's collective narrative. The former question has been addressed in the past (e.g., Pettigrew, 1997) but not in the context of intractable conflict. Bar-Natan (2004) carried out a study with 170 Israeli-Jewish and Israeli-Palestinian youngsters (ages 16-17) who participated in a three-day joint workshops at the *Givat Haviva* compound, where they intensively dealt with their respective views of the conflict, their experiences and feelings.

Bar-Natan's study yielded consistent positive correlations in the group of Jewish participants between the number and perceived depth of inter-group personal friendships developed during the workshop and pre- to posttest changes in their willingness for closer contacts with other members of the Palestinian group ($r = .53$, $N=90$, $p < .01$). Friendship seems to have contributed also to the legitimization of the Palestinian group's collective narrative by the Jewish participants ($r = .356$, $p < .01$).

Not so in the Palestinian group. Friendships that developed during the peace education workshop correlated with willingness for more contact with Jews at the end of the workshop ($r = .511$, $p < .01$, $N = 82$). However, legitimization of the Jewish narrative was unrelated to friendships ($r = .093$, $N = 82$). (Table 1). It needs to be noted that pretest measures did not correlate with any of the posttest ones, ruling out the possibility of a third factor phenomenon.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Thus, friendships developing during an encounter group can generalize to become a greater acceptance of members of the other group and to a greater legitimization of the other group's collective narrative. However, it appears that acceptance of members of the other group is easier than acceptance of the other group's point of view on the conflict. This is particularly difficult for the Palestinians, being a minority that perceives itself to be discriminated and dispossessed by the Jews. Hence, while friendships with Jews, as individuals, increases their motivation for greater closeness with members of that group, it does not affect acceptance of that narrative which they perceive as being the source of their discrimination (e.g., Yusuf, 2002). The correlation between acceptance of members of the Jewish group and acceptance of their narrative was $-.251$, compared with a correlation of $.258$ among the Jews ($p < .05$ for the difference between the two coefficients). Still, the emphasis some peace educators put on fostering interpersonal relations among opponents appears to have some merit as it can generalize to a greater acceptance of members of the other group.

Discussion and Conclusion: Does Peace Education Make a Difference?

In light of the above studies, does peace education make a difference? The answer is a qualified *Yes*. Thus, despite the challenges and the barriers facing peace

education in the context of intractable conflict, the programs studied here appear to affect attitudes and perceptions in desirable directions.

There is of course the question of the findings' validity. Two questions are of particular relevance: Were experimental and control groups comparable? Are participants' responses to be trusted? While the research reported here was based on field studies where strict random assignment to experimental and control groups was not possible, the way participants and whole school classes were assigned to these groups was not based on any selection variable of consequence. Careful comparison of pretest scores on relevant variables such as political views, religiosity and empathy towards the other side revealed no differences between the groups, enabling the researchers to treat the groups as comparable. Concerning the trustworthiness of the participants' responses, there is reason to accept them on face value since they were anonymous. The fact that the programs' effects were differential and that in some cases participants' responses manifested increased hatred or decreased empathy towards the other side suggests that neither social desirability nor fear of reprisal tainted participants' responses. It thus seems that the findings are sufficiently valid to conclude that peace education programs of the kind studied here do have desirable positive effects on those variables that were measured by means of verbal responses. The question as to whether participation in the programs affected in any noticeable way participants' actual behaviors or behavioral intentions in actual life situation remains so far an open one.

There are a number of lessons that can be derived from the findings reported here. The first and most important lesson is that peace education appears to have an effect even during as bad and violent a time as that of the *Intifadah*. Do such findings suggest that the threats to peace education, discussed earlier in this paper, are of lesser

severity than initially argued? Not likely, as, for example, the list of conditions necessary to make inter-group contact successful suggests (Pettigrew, 1998). It appears that each of the programs studied here consists of program-specific elements that facilitate overcoming the barriers of narrative, beliefs, inequality and belligerent environment in one way or another. For example, studying another, remote conflict (Lustig, 2003) seems to sidestep entrenchment and defensive responses as it provides a vantage point external to the more proximal conflict, thus allowing a new perspective. Similarly, facing and experiencing issues such as tolerance of the "other," coupled with actual meetings with members of the other side (Biton, 2002) may well facilitate processes of decategorization, recategorization, and mutual differentiation (Gaertner, Dovidio, Banker, Houlette, Johnson, & McGlynn, 2000) of members of the other side. Still, the specific processes that help programs overcome the described barriers need to be more precisely identified in subsequent studies.

Were the observed effects only temporary ones, residues that rapidly evaporated, as one might suspect? This, indeed, may be the case. The positive correlations between created friendships and the other variables observed by Bar-Natan (2004) were not found again when measurement was repeated six months after the ending of the studied workshops. This should not surprise us as a time span of half a year may be much too long for effects of a three day workshop to survive the onslaught of as violent a conflict as the one experienced during the same time. In the future, a replication of this study would need to examine the generalizability of friendships between adversaries as part of a peace education program that provides continuous opportunity for the ongoing maintenance of the friendships over time instead of a single workshop.

The studies reported here suggest two additional conclusions: First, and not surprisingly, relevant individual differences play an important role. Not everybody is affected by peace education programs to the same extent and in the same direction. Secondly, peace education may make a difference in more than one way: It may not *improve* anything, but it can *prevent deterioration* of attitudes and perceptions.

In what concerns individual differences, it appears that the views individuals hold about the conflict and about their adversary impact the way peace education affects them. This was evident in Lustig's (2003) study where learning about the Northern Irish conflict strengthened the correlations between pre-program and post-program attitudes towards the Palestinians, that is – it reinforced existing views. It was not the case in the group of non-participants. Such was also evident in the Shechter (2002) study. The kinds of lessons derived from the *March of Life* and the direction in which empathy toward the Palestinians changed depended greatly on initial views. We might call this *the attitude reinforcing function of peace education*. This conclusion is congruent with numerous other findings in the field of attitude change (e.g., Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

The second lesson pertains to the meaning of "to make a difference." Usually, we expect educational intervention to increase, improve, cultivate or reinforce desirable qualities, be it self-esteem or mastery of math, tolerance or self-regulation. Ostensibly, the goals of peace education are not much different, unless it takes place within the context of intractable conflicts, marred with outbursts of bloodshed, loss and heightened stress and anxiety. Under such conditions, the effects of peace education may well be to *block* further increases of negative attitudes and perceptions. In other words, as the findings by Biton (2002) tend to show, peace education can

serve as a barrier against the adverse psychological effects of the mushrooming conflict. We might call this *the preventive function of peace education*.

Peace education appears to have desirable effects, but in and of itself it can not resolve ongoing intractable conflicts; it can however prepare the ground for desirable political changes. To the extent that the political and the socio-psychological aspects of a conflict are interrelated, reciprocally affecting each other (e.g., Fisher, 1997), changes of the socio-psychological aspect are likely to affect the political by creating a popular transformative process concerning, among other things, more peace-oriented interpretations of the conflict (M. Ross, 2000) and a growing motivation to attain peaceful resolution.

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Table 1

Correlations between established friendships, willingness for contact with "others" ("MEMBERS") and legitimization of the other's collective narrative ("NARRATIVE").

	Israeli Jews (N= 90)	Israeli Palestinians (N = 82)
MEMBERS	.530**	.356*
NARRATIVES	.511**	.093

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

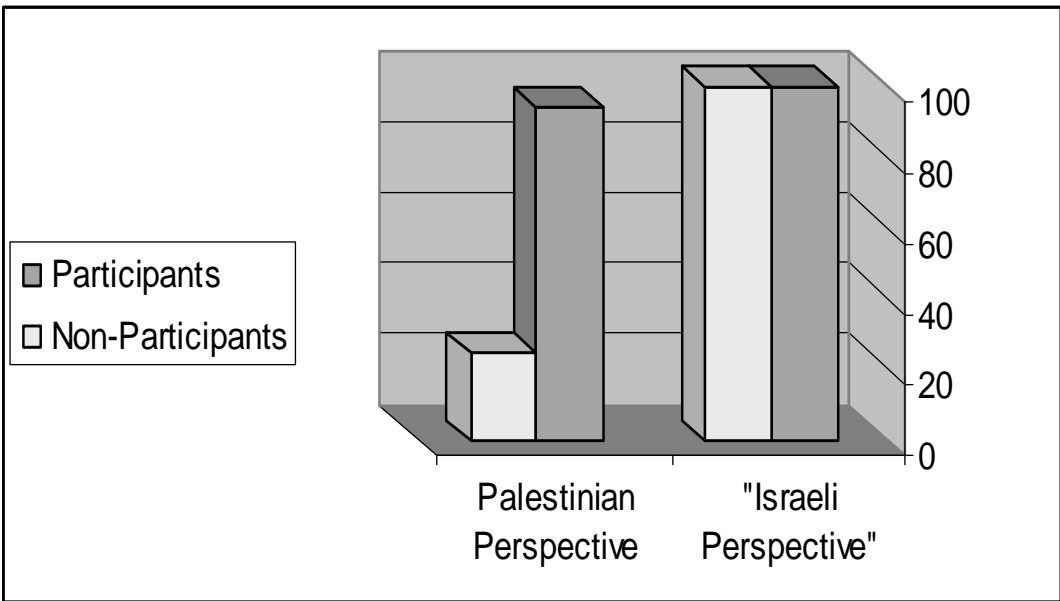
Figure captions

Figure 1: Percent of "Israeli" and "Palestinian" Essays (N=68) (Lustig, 2003)

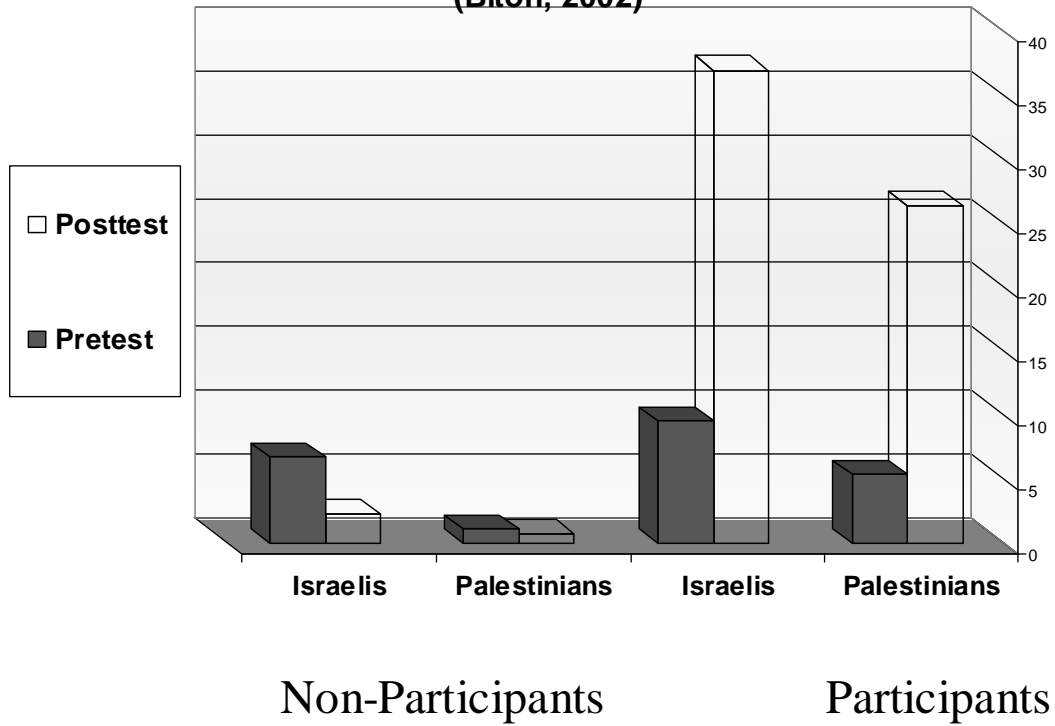
Figure 2: Percent of Positive Peace Responses (N=819) (Biton, 2002)

Figure 3: Percent Advocating War (Biton, 2002)

Figure 4: Path Analysis of the Contribution of Initial Political Views on Empathy
Towards the Arabs Among Participants in the "March for Life" (N=174)
(Shechter, 2002)



Percent of "positive Peace" (N=819)
(Biton, 2002)



Percent Advocating War (Biton, 2002)

